



Out of School Time and Iowa's Schools

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Many yesterdays ago, Iowa's school children left their school buildings and walked or rode the school bus home. Mom was there, or if she was not there a neighbor was handy for any emergency. Book bags were dropped and out to the yard or neighborhood the children ran to play with others. No one worried about strangers, and the kids were expected to be home for dinner.

Today, 79% of our students between the ages of 6 and 17 have their parents working – and that's both parents in a two-parent household. That's the highest percentage in the Midwest and higher than the national average of 67%. Thus, these students return to an empty home after school.

They also return to neighborhoods where no one is home, except perhaps other students. For those students, especially those who are too old for babysitters or day care or for those whose parents can't afford day care or babysitters, not only do they find an empty house, but they also have parents who begin to worry when the school bell rings. Those parents worry about the safety of their children: Did they make it home, did they invite others into the house, did they log onto the internet and visit sites unacceptable or are they logged into FaceBook or MySpace? Parents call home and kids call work places – work productivity falls, students feel isolated. No longer can they play in the yard, no longer can they bum a chocolate chip cookie from the neighbor next door. It's keep the doors locked, don't answer the phone, and do your homework.

For those students who don't return home after school, they may find that the downtown mall or the local Casey's is the place to hang out. Hanging out isn't the problem – it's what is sometimes thought up in the hanging out to reduce the boredom that creates the problems. Juvenile crime hits its peak and drug, alcohol and tobacco use is easily encouraged.

A solution lies in providing after-school programs that fill the voids. We cannot afford to leave the time to fill after school to chance. Iowa schools are one of the best in the nation – we also need to make sure that our students have safety nets not only during school, but also before and after school time.

You are here today because you believe in providing experiences after school that will ensure our students have not only a good school program but that they are ready to learn, safe, and out of trouble. After school programs can also help raise the academic performance of children.

Today's programs not only meet social and safety needs but they allow students to focus attention on areas in which they are having difficulties or sometimes just provide tutors or quiet time to complete homework. Many programs also provide enriching activities that expand the knowledge base of students, and thus provide an avenue of exploration or interest, or just plain background in a subject area. Good after school programs can also contribute to raising student's self-confidence. Providing time to interact in social situations and learn to handle conflicts in more acceptable ways allow classroom teachers the time to focus on teaching and learning rather than having to manage classroom discipline. A program I visited last year also formed a strong partnership with the faith communities within the school district. Tutors from the students' churches provided homework tables.

You have heard from others today that providing after-school programs is everybody's business. Youth alone at home or youth congregated together or youth alone on the streets can all lead to crime victimization or risky behavior. So everybody has a stake, from the storeowners to the police to the Moms and Dads who just want their children safe.

You've also heard from others on how to fund after school. There are many innovative methods across the US to make this happen. Our Legislature this year appropriated \$150,000 to support before- and after-school programs. An RFP was released yesterday from the department to support up to three new programs. The deadline for submission is July 31. Grant funds are available for use by school districts and other not-for-profit public and private organizations. Funds can be used to support the following types of activities that we know provide a good basis for after school programs.

- ❑ Tutoring and supplementing instruction in basic skills such as reading, math and science;
- ❑ Drug and violence prevention curricula and counseling;
- ❑ Youth leadership activities;
- ❑ Volunteer and service learning activities;
- ❑ Career and vocational awareness preparation; courses and enrichment in arts and culture;
- ❑ Computer instruction;
- ❑ Character development and civic participation;
- ❑ Language instruction, including English as a Second Language;
- ❑ Mentoring;
- ❑ Positive interaction with law enforcement;

- ❑ Supervised recreation programs; and
- ❑ Health and nutrition programs.

I am proud to be an Iowan – we tend to always look for the best and be the best, thus we cannot leave before- and after-school care to chance. Chance is not what is best for our children. Chance can lead nowhere – we desire that our children have somewhere to be and somewhere to go, that they are supported in attaining their hopes and dreams – that they are safe, that they have opportunities to help them live well and prepare for a future. Yesterdays are gone but our children have lots of tomorrows. Iowa's Blueprint for After-school can provide a bright tomorrow for all of our children.

Governor Introduction

In a few months there will be an election – Iowa will lose a Governor that has been a champion for our children. During times that were economically trying, Governor Vilsack kept his eye on the ball and didn't leave education unattended. Teacher Quality legislation was passed that provided extra supports and this year provided extra money to raise our teacher salaries. Early childhood and maintaining good Iowa schools have been hallmarks of his administration. But as he has told us time and time again he plans on working up to the very last minute of his time as Governor and he is demonstrating that every day with his attention to efforts such as this and pushing us all to raise our expectations for our children. Thank you Governor for all of your efforts to improve our children's lives and learning.